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ABSTRACT

A California elementary school teacher discusses the school-wide transitional bilingual education (TBE) program in her school, the problems associated with it, and her participation in an initiative to promote English language instruction for language minority populations. The institutional context of the TBE program, demographic changes that prompted its development, and school district policy are described, and ways in which the TBE program did not serve its intended function are detailed. A number of problems are attributed to Los Angeles School District policy and procedures, including discrepancies between the way the program is presented to parents and teachers and the way it actually works, program placement deficiencies, inappropriate testing and exit criteria, and the waiver system by which bilingual education teachers are transferred from their local schools. A reform effort, the Learning English Advocates Drive (LEAD), begun in 1987 is also chronicled, and the major reasons that reform has not occurred are outlined. These include political influences, unrealistic teacher education requirements, teacher unions, and teacher morale. Appended materials include a list of acronyms, the California home language survey form, school form letters to parents, and a teachers' union referendum ballot. Contains three references. (MSE)

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ED 384 211

ISSUE BRIEF

A Practicing Teacher's Views On Bilingual Education: The Need For Reform

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

By Sally Peterson

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Executive Summary

Sally Peterson first delivered the following speech in 1989. Her message was so compelling that English First Foundation asked to publish it as an Issue Brief.

Mrs. Peterson is a dedicated Los Angeles teacher who has seen first-hand the tragic results of Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE). She shows how TBE programs beguile parents into allowing their children into the bilingual education system through deceptive "Home Language Surveys." The system then traps the child in a cycle of failure through ever-tougher "exit criteria" designed to prolong a child's participation.

Teachers, too, feel the program's ill effects. They are harassed by waivers and credentialing programs which punish those who dare to disagree. They face a brick wall when dealing with their own union, an organization that teachers once looked to for relief. Instead, the union holds tenaciously to management's TBE dogma—even after teachers overwhelmingly voted (78%) to replace their union's policy with a more reasonable, English-intensive one.

Finally, some teachers are tired of seeing failure all around them. They have formed the Learning English Advocates Drive (LEAD) to give teachers a voice in educating limited English proficient (LEP) children. LEAD successfully led the drive to change the intransigent union's anti-English policy and is working to educate parents about all the options for educating LEP children.

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A Practicing Teacher's Views on Bilingual Education:

The Need for Reform

By Sally Peterson

Bilingual education has been presented as the program that would help our Limited English Proficient (LEP) students develop literacy in English, thereby achieving academic success, while they retained pride in their culture and heritage. But it has not succeeded, and it must be reformed.

With the enactment of the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 and the Supreme Court's Lau decision in 1974, this country embarked on a program that was academically deficient at its birth. The Lau decision did not mandate Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), but TBE was set up, not just as the preferred, but as the only acceptable method of education for LEP students after little academic input. For over twenty years, we classroom teachers have forged ahead within the constraints of TBE programs. These programs have been presented as sound educational theory, but they have proven to be seriously flawed in classroom application.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) mandated educational policy for LEP students in 1976, and again in 1978 with its LAUSD Lau Plan. These plans created a permanent TBE bureaucracy that has mandated and controlled the education of LEP students. California's TBE program has been mandated by the California Bilingual Education Improvement and Reform Act of 1980 (Assembly Bill 507), by Assembly Bill 37, and by California Education Code 52100.

California and Los Angeles have been influential nationwide in bilingual education, and their programs have frequently been taken as models for other states' and cities' bilingual education programs. California has the largest LEP population in the nation, nearly 600,000 students. Los Angeles alone has 160,000 LEP students in eighty-seven (87) different language groups. In the LAUSD, 59 percent of the students are Hispanic, 16 percent are non-Hispanic whites, 17 percent are Black, and 8 percent are Asian and other. In Los Angeles, TBE is mandated for all Hispanic LEP students, but almost all students from other language groups are taught in programs that focus on English-language development.

I. The Experience of Glenwood Elementary School

For the past twenty-five years, I have taught at Glenwood Elementary School, in Sun Valley, a small southern California city that is located in the San Fernando Valley. Glenwood Elementary is part of the LAUSD. The student population of Glenwood has shifted from 85 percent white to 85 percent Hispanic during these twenty-five years. Now most of our students are the children of blue-collar work-

ers, many uneducated and many illegal aliens, who work in the light industry that surrounds the school.

Throughout all of this period, the faculty of Glenwood Elementary has been small and heterogeneous, with little turnover. A large majority of teachers have been deeply involved in the school and the community. Glenwood had a strong principal, Mrs. Lois Krenz, for thirty years. She made a practice of knowing all of the 1,000 students of the school, as well as their families. She took a personal interest in each child and in their personal development.

This total cohesiveness of faculty, parents, and the principal was important for the community. It was especially important when the ethnic composition of the school changed. When students entered Glenwood with little or no English, they were welcomed as children who could and would achieve regardless of their language or their ethnicity. This feeling of warmth and caring provided a nurturing that was vital to each student. It allowed students to put aside their fears and their preconceived notions about their ability to learn. Students were cherished for the languages they brought to us, and they were encouraged to achieve to their greatest potential.

During this transitional period, some teachers at Glenwood acquired bilingual credentials. Many others learned new techniques in college courses and in District in-service classes for teaching LEP students. To develop a better awareness and understanding of our Hispanic students, the staff at Glenwood volunteered to be the pilot class in a new course on culture and methodology that was being developed by the California State Department of Education. We added an English as a Second Language (ESL) pull-out program. Our Hispanic bilingual teacher, Mrs. Terry McArthur, was particularly successful in giving valuable extra attention and one-to-one instruction to her students. She felt very strongly that her students should learn English quickly, and they did.

The students who came to Glenwood speaking Spanish were never completely isolated by their language. Many of their classmates spoke Spanish as well as English, and Glenwood encouraged bilingual students to communicate with newcomers in their own languages. As many other language groups came to Glenwood, it became impossible to provide teachers who were skilled in the home language of each minority group. Thus, we continually expanded our ESL classes and our use of Sheltered English techniques. We praised those who brought other languages to us for having their language skills, even as we helped them to develop fluency in English. As our LEP students continued to develop English fluency, both the students and their teachers gained a sense of pride in accomplishment.

Glenwood also worked to involve parents in their children's education. Many parents did not participate in school activities because they were unable to speak English or because they were aliens whose immigration status in the United States was illegal. This remained a problem for many years. With the advent of the amnesty program for illegal immigrants and with years of adult English classes offered by Glenwood, we are now experiencing a resurgence of parental involvement. Parents now realize that, regardless of whether they speak English, Spanish, or another language, they are welcomed at their children's school and are necessary to their children's education. Their struggles to learn English are encouraged by our staff, and we all feel a shared joy in their success.

Transitional bilingual education classes were begun at Glenwood in 1979. Mrs. June Frankenberg, a bilingual fifth-grade teacher, became our first TBE teacher. I was asked to participate in the bilingual program in 1981, and I was assigned to a standard TBE-model class, with a very capable Spanish-bilingual aide. Two-thirds of my students were LEP or NEP (non-English proficient), and one-third were FEP (fluent English proficient) students.

In Los Angeles, the school district set up strict guidelines for LEP students: "Students identified as having primary language proficiency shall receive instruction as follows: a) Basic skills instruction in the primary language. b) A structured English-language program to develop their English-language skills."[1] In layman's terms, this means native-language instruction that includes twenty (20) minutes of ESL per day, as required by law. This approach had been mandated on both the state and federal levels as the logical choice of instruction for the LEP student.

The entire staff was anxious to see how this new program would work. We had all been exposed to the methodology that mandated TBE, and the "transfer of learning" theory made a great deal of sense to me and to all of us on the Glenwood staff. It seemed that students who learned their primary languages until they were fluent and literate should acquire English as a second language more effectively.

Along with most educators, most politicians and community leaders accepted this view at the time. But it was evident from the start that many of the techniques that had been developed by the theorists in charge of the bilingual program did not function well in a classroom setting. The program that was promised to be a two to three-year transitional program was seriously flawed. In reality, it became a long-term, monolingual, Spanish-language development program.

I struggled to make the TBE program work, as did my colleagues working in bilingual classes. However, we finally had to admit our concerns about the implementation of TBE and the validity of its theory. We all echoed a common concern: <u>it doesn't work!</u>

However, because of the political pressure that has been exerted to support TBE, few bilingual educators, politicians, or community leaders have been willing to criticize these programs. The education and policy establishment has turned a deaf ear to the experience of rank-and-file teachers. Never before in the history of education has a program that has been such a failure received so many accolades.

As teachers, we know that no single approach will work for all children. This educational premise is accepted in all areas of learning with the exception of bilingual education. In this area, TBE has continued to be mandated by law for most LEP students, regardless of its results.

By perpetuating the misguided notion that TBE is a success, the Los Angeles Unified School District has caused more damage to LEP students than any other single group in this county. The bureaucracy of the bilingual education program has been impossible to penetrate. The program is as seriously flawed as the research behind it, but the LAUSD has rejected any attempts at reform of the program. This very powerful school district has rejected the challenging role of leading in the reform of the education of LEP students.

It was promised that TBE would lower the drop-out rate of LEP students. But

today, "students with non-English language backgrounds drop out at roughly twice the rate of those with English language backgrounds."[2] Non-English-speaking children continue to be isolated in schools. They are denied a chance to compete on an equal basis in an English-speaking society. And teachers are forced by a TBE waiver system to leave their local schools, as I will discuss later.

II. Abuses of the Transitional Bilingual Education Program

In this section of my paper, I shall give an overview of the problems that Los Angeles educators are experiencing. Please keep in mind that these abuses are not isolated instances. They occur throughout this 702-square-mile school district.

Home Language Surveys and Parent Permission Forms

The law setting up the bilingual plan stated that parents had the right to decide whether to place their children in a bilingual program. Many bilingual educators oppose this parental choice, arguing that we do not allow parental choice over other elements of the curriculum. That is true, but the bilingual program determines the language in which children will be taught, and that choice is very much the parent's right. Curriculum and content are in the academic domain, but the opportunity to learn English supplants all other considerations.

In practice, however, parental choice is often evaded in bilingual programs. Let me describe a typical scenario. The parent who brings a child to a school is given a home language survey (Illustration 1). This survey inquires about the languages spoken in the home and so forth. If the parent says that any person in the home speaks any language other than English, the child is targeted as a possible LEP student. The child may in fact be fluent in English, but he is now en route to becoming a statistic.

Next, the parent is given the bilingual permission form (Illustration 2). This is printed both in English and in the primary language of the student or parent. After reading the description of TBE on this permission slip, few parents would oppose enrolling their children in the program. The description states, in glowing terms, that the child will be taught core subjects in his or her native language but that, as his or her ability increases, instruction in English will also increase. Instruction in both the native language and English will continue until the child is proficient in the native language, at which time the child will receive all instruction in English. Most parents agree to this plan readily.

However, this description of the TBE program is shamefully misleading. In reality, most students will be locked into their native languages, and little emphasis at all will be placed on English language development.

The alternative to a TBE program is an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), which allows the child's teacher to use any or all of the available educational techniques to focus on English language development. But the LAUSD intervenes when too many parents at any given school site sign their children out of the TBE program and select ILPs. The LAUSD regional office sends bilingual education staff members to the local school site and calls in targeted parents who have selected ILPs. These parents are lectured on the benefits of TBE and told that it is the best method for their children. They may be shown an illustrative film. This film depicts a happy, well-dressed child who is

learning in his native language and a sad, downtrodden, miserable child who is learning in English. The film continually repeats that learning in English is harmful.

In many cases, parents will sign their children into TBE after this session. However, parents who continue to insist upon ILPs will often be the target of repeated phone calls from LAUSD bilingual program officials. This kind of harassment and duress is an insult to parents, but it is not the extent of the school district's manipulation of the parental consent process.

At some schools, bilingual coordinators aggressively pursue the placement of children in TBE. I have seen bilingual permission forms that have mistakenly been signed by parents in both the "yes" and "no" columns. When these forms eventually reach the classroom teachers, the "noes" have been scratched out and the "yeses" have been left in place. It is also not uncommon for ILP permission forms to "disappear" and for parents to be required to come to the school to sign additional forms.

The school district's procedure for signing permission forms has also changed. In the past, it was a simple matter for a parent to sign a child out of TBE. The parent could request the form from the classroom teacher or the school office, sign it at home, and send it to the school. At schools where too many parents have signed their children out of TBE, however, this procedure was changed, first to require parents to obtain the permission form from the office of the bilingual coordinator. Then it was changed to require parents to make an appointment to see the bilingual coordinator to obtain the form. As a matter of practice, the bilingual coordinator is not readily available to parents who wish to sign their children out of the program. Parents who drop in to get a form are always turned away and told to set up an appointment, regardless of whether the bilingual coordinator was available at the time.

I have personally witnessed the pressure put on parents at their meetings with bilingual coordinators. I have attended parental meetings at which school personnel describe the wonderful successes of TBE that are not actually occurring and at which those who are critical of TBE are forbidden to speak one word.

Parents of FEP students are treated similarly. They are given parental permission forms to sign their children into the bilingual program as Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) students. The latest Parent Permission Slip for FEP students (Illustration 3) offers only the TBE option. When parents are given it at registration time, they will most likely sign it as a matter of routine. Many parents want their children to learn a second language, and agree to place them in the program. In reality, the SSL program is a disgrace. Most SSL students rarely learn to do more than count from one to ten and to name the colors in Spanish. FEP students are useful as language role models in bilingual classrooms but the bilingual classes are not useful to them.

At Glenwood, all of our classrooms are now bilingual. Thirty-three (33) of these classrooms are targeted as TBE models. If parents do not want their children in the TBE program, they are told that the children will remain in a bilingual classroom but will participate in the English-only portion of the program. Most of the student's instructional time is wasted; he or she will hear more Spanish than English during the allotted instructional period.

Program Placement

There are five questions on the Home Language Survey regarding the languages used in the home. If any of these questions shows a language other than English, even if it only indicates that someone in the household speaks another language, the child is automatically assumed to need a Basic Inventory of Native Language (BINL) to determine whether he or she is as proficient in that language as in English.

In the BINL, the child must describe a series of pictures to the tester, both in English and in his or her native language. The examiner is required to write down the child's words, phrases, and thoughts. The test may give inaccurate results in any number of ways. If the child rambles without making sense, but still produces enough verbiage, he or she can be labeled as FEP. If the child is frightened by the surroundings of the new school, by the unfamiliar people, or by, the new test, he or she may not respond sufficiently, may not produce the required word count, and may be labeled as limited English proficient or non-English proficient, even if he or she has a much higher level of language ability. A child who speaks only English, but who is hampered by the testing situation, will be placed in a Spanish bilingual classroom as a LEP student, and given instruction in all core subjects in Spanish.

In June 1988, when one of these pictures was shown at a Los Angeles Board of Education meeting to the President of the Board, Mrs. Roberta Weintraub, she described it as a picture of a boy sitting on a rock. Since the picture was supposed to depict the child sitting on the back of a water buffalo, Mrs. Weintraub gave an incorrect description, though with enough verbiage to escape actually being classified as LEP herself. All of the Board members found this situation to be very amusing, but it graphically demonstrates the shortcomings of the BINL testing instrument, and the fallacy of using it to determine linguistic ability.

The pictures used in the BINL test are very bad. They do little to stimulate children and to elicit from them the language that they need to pass the test. Even the L.A. Board of Education has agreed that this testing instrument must be replaced, yet we are still testing children with these same pictures. When a teacher used another set of pictures, and proved a higher percentage of children to be fluent in English, the teacher was ordered to stop using the new set and to use the designated pictures instead.

Testing and Exit Criteria

Once a child has been placed in the bilingual program, he or she is often unable to meet the unrealistic exit criteria. Students who are unable to meet predetermined reading levels in Spanish may languish in a bilingual classroom for years. Many of those who are able to make the transition to English classes find themselves so far behind their peers in vocabulary and English skills that they never catch up.

The new LAUSD Bilingual Master Plan raises the exit criteria, thus making it even more difficult for children to exit from the program. These inflated exit criteria negate the whole premise of a short two to three year native language instruction period. The children are effectively locked into native language or transitional classes. One in six school children in California is an immigrant, and this percentage is growing. Locked into TBE classes, these children are being denied their right to develop fluency in English.

Waiver System

In California, when the TBE model was set up, there was not a sufficient number of certified bilingual education teachers to implement the plan. To bypass this problem, the California Bilingual Education Act mandated a waiver program. Any teacher working in the bilingual program had to sign a waiver which allowed him or her seven years to study the targeted culture and language and bilingual methodology and to pass tests to qualify for a bilingual credential.

An entire business enterprise grew up around fulfilling the waiver requirement: college classes, review courses, textbooks, courses of instruction, and tests. Many teachers found that the classes and review courses that they took in methodology taught only one methodological approach for all students, and that the courses they took in culture were in actuality an indoctrination in a radical Chicano political agenda.

The tests were a burgeoning business in themselves. The University of Southern California required a $65.00 testing fee for each section of the test, and the failure rate was phenomenal. In 1986, for example, four thousand teachers took tests at USC, and only 252 teachers received a Certificate of Competency. One explanation for this high failure rate may be that passing the tests required conformity to the radical Chicano political agenda promoted in the classes and review courses. The content of the courses and tests was so far removed from true Hispanic culture and methodology that Mexican teachers have been unable to pass tests in Hispanic culture.

The waiver system has become a form of blackmail by which teachers may be transferred against their wishes. School stability and faculty rapport have been sacrificed to the waiver program. By 1984, many teachers, I among them, began to take a stand against the waiver program and to refuse to sign the waivers. The threat of displacement hangs over us constantly. Regardless of our actual teaching skills or of our record of success, we are considered inadequate by the promoters of the waiver program.

The New LAUSD Bilingual Master Plan

LAUSD has tried many varied approaches to education. On many occasions, when it became obvious that a new theory or a new trend that had been experimented with was unsuccessful, that approach was changed or dropped. This kind of experimentation is part of the continuous challenge of teaching. Bilingual education is yet another educational theory and program that classroom teachers soon realized was not working. When the California Bilingual Bill was sunsetted in June of 1987, classroom teachers who sought bilingual reform were eager to give our input to the new master plan being developed by LAUSD. I was selected as one member of the 140-person LAUSD Task Force.

Unfortunately, I was one of the few, if not the only, member who felt that other educational options should be explored. Most people on the panel had been handpicked for their loyalty to the TBE program. I was continually told that my views were welcomed and that the LAUSD Task Force would allow for a diversity of views. In reality, however, the entire series of meetings held by the LAUSD Task Force had been designed to lead to one preordained conclusion.

The new LAUSD bilingual education plan was adopted in 1988. It completely ignores the failures of the past fifteen years and sets up a program that is even more rigid and dogmatic than the old one. The new program will certainly lead to continued academic failure. The criteria for exiting from TBE programs have been raised. TBE programs have been expanded to include prekindergarten through the twelfth grade. TBE classes are mandated where there are ten LEP students. Elementary school ESL pull-out classes have been completely eliminated. And prekindergarten teachers have been mandated to use Spanish for 80 percent of the school day.

The new LAUSD plan initiates a $5,000 annual bonus stipend for bilingual teachers. Historically, California teachers have had one salary schedule. This two-tiered system divisively pits the skills of one teacher against another. The new plan eliminates the waiver system, but introduces in its place a Language Development Specialist Credential (LDS) that monolingual English-speaking teachers must acquire in order to remain eligible to teach LEP students. While the plan allows for some pairing of monolingual with bilingual teachers, it is obvious that monolingual English-speaking teachers are considered to be inadequate. Teachers from foreign countries, on the other hand, need not pass the California Basic Essential Skills Test (C-BEST). And those who have expertise in a targeted language may be hired to teach even if they have no college degree or fluency in English.

III. The Formation of the Learning English Advocates Drive (LEAD)

During the past few years, many classroom teachers have been contacting state and local officials, the school district leadership, the school board, and our own union, the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), to create an awareness of the problems in the TBE program. In most cases, teachers' concerns have been dismissed, and the teachers have been told that they themselves were the problem. Academic circles have been closed to us. In private, teachers, politicians, and community leaders have encouraged us to continue the struggle for reform. But few are willing to take a stand publicly.

At one culture class, I recall expressing my concern that children were being locked into their native languages and that most of those who were able to exit the TBE program never caught up with their English-speaking peers. The response was that I was lazy and did not implement the program correctly.

When a group of concerned teachers and parents made a presentation to the Los Angeles School District Board of Education in May 1988, the Board president attacked us verbally, accusing us of being racist and anti-minority, and said that the Board was ashamed of us. When Mrs. Krenz, the former principal of Glenwood Elementary School, rose to protest this outrageous treatment, she was silenced. The Board's audio tape of the meeting deleted this verbal attack.

LEAD, the Learning English Advocates Drive, is a grass-roots teachers' organization that was formed in March 1987 at Glenwood Elementary School. It seeks to reform, not eliminate, bilingual education and to expose the failure of TBE. We oppose TBE because the principles on which TBE is based do not allow it "as effectively and efficiently as possible to develop in each child fluency in English."[3]

It is not LEAD's goal to impose an all-English education upon all students. As educators know, no single approach works

for all students. We simply want to explore alternatives to TBE. It is because we are proud of the heritages, cultures, and languages that our students bring to our schools that we oppose the segregation of students based on their languages.

I shall discuss below the major reasons that we have been unable to achieve reform of bilingual education.

Labels and Intimidation Tactics

Unfortunately for our students, anyone who has tried to reform bilingual education has been subjected to name-calling and intimidation. Initially, it was shocking that the educational establishment would reject those who tried to call attention to students' needs and who wished to improve a program in order to help LEP students. But the establishment has effectively stopped all constructive criticism from taking place by the use of name-calling.

The bilingual education lobby has been very successful in creating a myth that anyone who did not favor TBE was anti-minority or racist. This use of stereotypical labels has effectively masked the reality. The public perception of bilingual education is that it is great because its aims are great: to help non-English speaking students learn English and to help fluent English speakers learn a second language. This perception, coupled with media attention that focuses on the need for special help for LEP students, has created the myth that TBE has been successful for all LEP students. The reality is that TBE does not encourage bilingualism. Instead, it perpetuates monolingualism and does not enable English speakers to learn a second language formally.

LAUSD and its personnel have used a variety of tactics in addition to name-calling to prevent classroom teachers from revealing the problems and flaws in TBE. Life for the average grade-school teacher can be made very unpleasant through threats of public censure, grade displacement, school displacement, and disfavor from a principal. Teachers are frequently subjected to the whims of their immediate supervisors, and are not empowered or able to defend themselves. Usually, the only defense a teacher has is his or her union or professional association. A teacher who opposes a policy favored by both his supervisor and his union is very much alone. My personal experience can serve as an example. I have taught the third grade for twenty-four years, but I was reassigned to teach kindergarten two months after I helped found LEAD.

In this unhealthy climate, the majority of LEAD's members ask to remain anonymous. They call us, express their fears, and ask for reassurance that we will never reveal their names.

The Waiver System and the LDS Credential

The very unpopular waiver system was finally eliminated. But, as I wrote above, under the new master plan the waiver system has been replaced by the requirement that teachers in the program obtain a Language Development Specialist Credential (LDS) or a Bilingual Cross-Cultural Certificate (BCC). A certain amount of pairing of monolingual with bilingual staff members is allowed. However, displacement is still a possibility, and administrators are encouraged to place bilingual staff members at the primary level.

Most good teachers tend to specialize in one grade level or subject. They become unofficial advisors to other teachers who enter that grade level or subject. Admittedly, a California teaching credential allows teachers to teach various grade levels, but we are now experiencing grade-level changes in which teachers are moved around as if they were interchangeable pieces of furniture rather than valued and skilled employees.

As one example, I know of a teacher who was displaced from her school for not obtaining a bilingual credential. She was asked to return to the school to train her replacement, who spoke no English, had never taught before, and had been given an emergency credential. When this teacher refused, she was assigned to another bilingual classroom at a school miles away from her home.

Most teachers in the LAUSD have been teaching ESL as a part of their classroom responsibility. Many have taken review classes to keep themselves current with the latest strategies for teaching ESL effectively. Under the new master plan, teachers must have Language Development Specialist Credentials (LDS) to be qualified as ESL teachers. Essentially, the waiver system has been replaced by the LDS credential.

Teacher Unions

One of the most frustrating aspects of this struggle has been the lack of support or the outright opposition of the various teacher unions. The official policy of the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) is to support TBE. The president of the union, Mr. Wayne Johnson, spoke with the staff of Glenwood Elementary and suggested that if we wanted to poll the membership on this issue we should gather signatures and submit them to him. This was done, but the poll was never published.

We presented a motion favoring English language development that was passed at the Valley-East UTLA meeting. The UTLA Chicano Bilingual Education Committee, which is controlled by a small group of very vocal activists, is responsible for setting UTLA's policy on education for LEP students. It greeted this motion with an angry, emotional, and racial attack, and rejected it outright.

We gathered the necessary signatures to bring the motion (Illustration 4) to a referendum of the entire membership of UTLA. Our opponents also qualified to place a referendum on the same ballot. In an August 1988 vote, 78 percent of UTLA's members supported our referendum. The second referendum was defeated. But the final status of this referendum is still in doubt, as no one in the leadership of UTLA will support the position of the membership and publicly advocate this shift in policy.

LEAD has also approached the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and their state associates, the California Teachers Association (CTA) and the California Federation of Teachers (CFT). At this time, NEA and CTA have retained their strongly pro-TBE positions. But the membership of the AFT, at the national convention held in San Francisco in July 1988, rejected a motion to reaffirm support for TBE. It voted for a compromise motion that states, "WHEREAS, transitional bilingual education is one method of teaching limited-English-proficient children, but other methods such as English as a Second Language and Sheltered English have also proven to be successful alternatives for many such children."[4]

This was a major victory for the San Francisco LEAD members who had lobbied for four days during the convention. We found that many state delegations had been totally misled by the bilingual lobby, and thought that bilingual education focused on English development. Naively, we thought this policy shift would receive national attention, but AFT has made no public policy statement on it to this date.

Political Reality

In California, bilingual education has unfortunately become a political issue that divides the political parties. The Assembly and the Senate have continually tossed the issue back and forth. Many Democratic politicians have equated bilingual education with liberalism and treated it as a benefit program for minority populations. Republican politicians, led by Frank Hill, an assemblyman from Whittier, have advocated flexibility and revisions in local plans.

This political division was displayed in the reconfirmation hearing on Mrs. Angie Papadakis as a member of the California State Board of Education. Mrs. Papadakis was one of the Board's most devoted members, and she had a brilliant record throughout her tenure. Her reconfirmation should have been a mere formality. But she had taken a strong stand for parental rights and program flexibility in bilingual education, and for elimination of the waiver system. The California State Senate Education Committee subjected her to intensive questioning on her views on bilingual education. The hearings went on indefinitely, with several delays and postponements. When the committee voted, one member was conveniently out of the country and another member abstained, so that her reconfirmation died for lack of necessary votes. She was told quite pointedly that she had been denied reconfirmation because of her opposition to the current bilingual plan.

On the federal level, by contrast, there has been significant progress in opening up and expanding programs for LEP children. Congress had previously allowed only 4 percent of federal funding for LEP students to be devoted to programs other than TBE. In the summer of 1988, it lifted this ceiling so that up to 25 percent of federal funding could be spent on alternative programs. This should encourage school districts to experiment with alternative approaches.

But the LAUSD has not taken advantage of this change to pursue varying options. Instead, it has reaffirmed its sole allegiance to the TBE theory and rejected efforts to seek reform, and by doing so it has turned its back on the LEP child.

Research

When I became involved in this reform movement, I knew very little about most of the research projects. I had been taught the accepted theories and had been told that TBE was successful. When, because of my personal experiences and observations, I began to challenge the LAUSD over its bilingual plan, the struggle quickly shifted to the field of research. I have a great respect for those dedicated individuals who have worked so hard to generate valid research.

I am not an expert in research and I find most research projects to be intimidating at best. But, with the help of tutors such as Dr. Robert Rossier and Dr. Keith Baker, I have learned how research projects are used in bilingual education.

One example is typical. Congressman Augustus Hawkins (D-CA), chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, commissioned a study by the Congressional Research Service to determine the effectiveness of TBE. The conclusion of that study was "there is no consensus on a single successful instructional approach. ...Well trained sensitive teachers who individualize their instructional approach ... are successful in improving the academic achievement of LEP students."[5] Congressman Hawkins never publicized or utilized this report.

Instead, he sought a report from the General Accounting Office (GAO) on the same subject. This was to be an unbiased analysis of selected research. Yet Lily Wong Filmore, one of the panel members, helped to evaluate her own research project. After the report, which supported TBE, was released, two of the original panel members wrote letters of dissent. The Department of Education rejected the GAO report because of the bias of the panel members. Yet Congressman Hawkins promoted this report extensively, and gained widespread press coverage for this research "validation" of TBE.

This is but one example of the abuses that can occur when research data is manipulated and when advocates shop for favorable research findings. My own view on TBE is based on my experience as an ordinary classroom teacher. It has probably been best stated by Baker and DeKanter in their evaluation of volumes of research projects: "The conclusion is straightforward: There is no justification in terms of educational effectiveness for the proposed August 1980 regulations which would have mandated TBE as the sole instructional method for language-minority children. TBE has had mixed success. Although it has worked in some settings, it has proved ineffective in others and has had negative effects in some places. Furthermore, alternative instructional methods have been found to succeed -- even to be superior to TBE -- in some schools."[6]

As an educator, I espouse the simple but effective theory of linguistics that discusses language acquisition in terms of input and output. To teach a language, you must give extensive input of the target language in order to achieve an output. As Angie Papadakis wrote, "Ramon and his classmates will not learn English by being taught Spanish any more than they will learn the violin by playing the piano."[7] LAUSD mandates Spanish input and allows the public to believe that the output will be English.

Teacher Morale

TBE has done more to lower teachers' morale than any other program I know. From the onset of TBE, it was clear that the directors of the program thought that English-speaking teachers lacked the skills necessary to work with LEP students. Before this program, we were valued professionals who met the needs of LEP students with native language support, ESL techniques, Sheltered English and cooperative learning. We experienced the joy in being able to help boys and girls of all nationalities succeed.

But since the onset of TBE, we have been told that we are inadequate, if not also uncaring teachers. We have seen our students in TBE programs fail to achieve their potential and be segregated by language groupings. We have seen the drop-out rate in Los Angeles rise to 40 percent. And we have seen that California's public schools, using the TBE approach, have been able to send only three percent of their Hispanic students to college.

A recently decided U.S. District Court case, Teresa P. v. Berkeley Unified School District, is significant. The suit contended that, 1) the schools of Berkeley, California did not provide enough instruction in native languages and, 2) the students should be taught by credentialed bilingual teachers. The attorneys for the Berkeley School District, Thomas Donovan and Celia Ruiz, were successful in disproving both of these allegations. The complainants sought to have TBE imposed as the sole method for teaching LEP students in the schools of Berkeley. However, Judge D. Lowell Jensen made the right, common-sense, decision: "Good teachers are good teachers no matter what the educational challenge may be."[8]

The ability to speak a language other than English should never be the sole determinant of whether a teacher is competent or should be accredited. As the case correctly determined, students with limited English proficiency can be taught well by teachers who do not have specialized bilingual education credentials, and these students do not need to be taught solely in their native languages.

As one rank-and-file classroom teacher, but also as the representative of many more of my colleagues, I ask for the freedom to use the teaching methods that are best suited for my students. I ask that we be allowed to give our LEP pre-kindergarten students the language skills that will enable them to start school on a par with their English-speaking peers. And I ask that we be allowed to concentrate on developing our students' English fluency and literacy, so they may reach their maximum potential as successful citizens of this country.

##

Afterword

Mrs. Peterson and her fellow teachers at Glenwood Elementary School have continued their campaign to inform the public about the nature of bilingual education. In the spring of 1990, they and concerned parents led a successful parent-education drive to let people know they have a right to put their children in English intensive classes instead of Spanish-only "bilingual" education.

Teachers and concerned parents distributed a flier entitled "Your Child Has a Right to Learn English" to parents with children in the bilingual system. The flier contained a brief description of the parents' rights along with a form that allowed parents to remove children from the Spanish-based bilingual system and place them in an English Language Development Program.

Although those who live off the bilingual system were outraged, newly informed parents have been withdrawing their children from the classes in growing numbers. Because parents are learning about their rights, Glenwood school witnessed a 15% drop in the number of Spanish-based bilingual education classes in the 1988/89 school year. So many children withdrew that the number of classes went from 33 to 28.

The next year, 1989/90, with the help of the parent education drive, the number of Spanish-only bilingual education classes fell 29%, from 28 to 20. Thus, in just two years the number of such classes in one school alone has plunged an average of 24% per year. Furthermore, over the two year period, nearly 40% of the native language classes were canceled.

When parents know their rights, they send an unmistakable message: "Teach my children English!" Parents simply do not want their children in a "separate but equal" bilingual system. They want their children to learn English -- as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Peterson's brand of pro-parent, pro-teacher, pro-English activism combined with teacher/parent cooperation is desperately needed in the nation's schools. It is time that unrestrained, unresponsive bureaucracies, school boards, and unions discover that parents care the most about their own children. Teachers are on the front lines trying to meet the needs of those same children, hand in hand with caring parents.

In order to further educate parents and assist concerned teachers, the English First Foundation has reprinted the flier "Your Child Has a Right to Learn English" (Illustration 5). We join Mrs. Peterson and LEAD in encouraging citizens to use it as a national model for local schools. If you would like more information, please contact the English First Foundation.

(The views expressed by the author are her own and are not necessarily those of the English First Foundation).

List of Acronyms

AFT	American Federation of Teachers
BCC	Bilingual Cross-Cultural Credential
BINL	Basic Inventory of Native Language
C-BEST	California -- Basic Essential Skills Test
CFT	California Federation of Teachers
CTA	California Teachers Association
ESL	English as a Second Language
FEP	Fluent English Proficient
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
LDS	Language Development Specialist credential
LEAD	Learning English Advocates Drive
LEP	Limited English Proficient
NEA	National Education Association
NEP	Non-English Proficient
SSL	Spanish as a Second Language
TBE	Transitional Bilingual Education
UTLA	United Teachers of Los Angeles

L.A.U.S.D.
Bilingual. ESL
FORM 34-EH-62 (Rev. 4/82)
STK. NO. 815340 (English/Spanish)
P.O. 125-98142-4

Illustration 1

HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY
ENGLISH

_____ **Date**

_____ **School**

_____ **Teacher**

The *California Education Code* requires schools to determine the language(s) spoken at home by each student. This information is essential in order for schools to provide meaningful instruction for all students.

Your cooperation in helping us meet this important requirement is requested. Please answer the following questions and have your son/daughter return this form to his/her teacher. Thank you for your help.

Name of student: _____ _____ _____
Last First Middle Grade Age

1. Which language did your son or daughter learn when he or she first began to talk? _____
2. What language does your son or daughter most frequently use at home? _____
3. What language do you use most frequently to speak to your son or daughter? _____
4. Name the language most often spoken *by the adults* at home. _____

State of California
Department of Education
OPER-LS 77 R-6/78

_____
Signature of parent or guardian

ENCUESTA SOBRE EL IDIOMA HABLADO EN EL HOGAR
HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY

Fecha (Date)	ESPAÑOL SPANISH	Escuela School
		Maestro(a) (Teacher)

El Código de Educación de California require que las escuelas determinen el idioma que se habla en el hogar de cada estudiante. Esta informacion es esencial para que las escuelas proporcionen instrucción apropiada para todos los estudiantes.

Le pedimos su cooperación en ayudarnos a cumplir con este requisito importante. Por favor conteste las siguientes preguntes y haga que su hijo o hija devuelva esta forma a su maestro. Gracias por su ayuda.

Nombre del alumno: _____ _____ _____
(Name) Apellido (Last) | Nombre de pila completo (Given names) | Grado (Grade) | Edad (Age)

1. Cuando su hijo(a) empezó a hablar, cual idioma aprendió primero?
2. Cual idioma usa principalmente su hijo(a) cuando conversa en la casa?
3. Cual idioma usa Ud. con mas frecuencia cuando habla con su hijo(a)?
4. Cual idioma hablan los adultos con mas frecuencia en la casa?

State of California
Department of Education
OPER-LS 77 R-6/78
(Spanish Version 5/82)

_____
Firma del padre o tutor
Signature of parent or guardian

GLENWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
8001 Ledge Avenue
Sun Valley, CA 91352

Illustration 2

NOTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT IN
BILINGUAL PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION

Dear Parent:

Your child has been assessed regarding his/her English language fluency. Based on this assessment, your child will be enrolled in a bilingual program of instruction.

This program serves non- and limited-English-Speaking children by making provisions for the following:

1. Instruction in English-as-a-Second Language for students who do not have the English language skills necessary to profit from instruction given only in English.

2. The development of the ability to read and write in English at the appropriate time.

3. The development of the ability to read and write in the primary language, as appropriate.

4. Instruction in math, science, and social studies presented in both the native language of the student and English.

5. The development of a positive self-concept.

6. The study of the historical and cultural heritage of the participating students.

Children enrolled in a bilingual program as a result of the assessment of their fluency in English will continue in the program until further testing indicates they can participate successfully in a program conducted only in English.

Parents whose children are, or will be, enrolled in a bilingual program are invited to visit the classes and to participate in the school or district advisory committee.

You have the option as a parent or guardian not to have your child enrolled in a bilingual program of instruction.

If you desire further information, please contact the school.

---------- Cut here and return ----------

I have read and understood the description of the bilingual program being provided by the school.

1. Please be advised that I do wish my child _____
to participate in the bilingual program described. (Name of Student)

2. Please be advised that I do not wish my child _____
to participate in the bilingual program described. (Name of Student)

_____ _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian Date

GLENWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Illustration 3

FLUENT ENGLISH SPEAKING BILINGUAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Dear Parents:

We are pleased to announce that a program of Bilingual Education is being offered at our school and that your child has an opportunity to participate in this meaningful experience.

The bilingual program provides an excellent opportunity for your child to learn a second language at a period in your child's life when capacities for language learning are at the highest level.

The bilingual classroom is composed of pupils who are fluent-English speakers as well as pupils who are fluent in a language other than English. Instruction is conducted in both languages according to the individual needs of students and the subject being taught.

The curriculum provided in a bilingual program consists of:

For the Fluent-English Speaker

1. The learning of reading and writing as in the general program of instruction.
2. The learning of other subjects such as math, science, and social studies through the use of English.
3. The learning of a new language -- understanding, speaking, reading and writing -- through the daily use of that language in an natural classroom environment.
4. The continued development of a positive self-image.
5. Pride in and knowledge of their home culture as well as that of their classmates.

For the Fluent-Speaker of the Language Other-Than English

1. The learning of the English language through the use of special language development techniques reinforced by communication with fluent-English-speaking classmates.
2. The learning of other subject matter such as math, science, and social studies through the use of the home language and English.
3. The development of the ability to read and write in the home language and when ready, in English.
4. The continued development of a positive self-image.
5. Pride in and knowledge of their home culture as that of the United States.

Parents interested in enrolling their child in a bilingual program are invited to visit the bilingual classes.

We hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to have your child enrolled in a bilingual program of instruction. If this is your desire, please sign the attached form and assure its return to the school as soon as possible.

I wish my child _____ to participate in the bilingual program described.
(name of student)

_____ _____

Signature of Parent Guardian Date

BALLOT

REFERENDUM I

Be it resolved that UTLA's position on the bilingual program will be as follows:

The primary goal is to effectively and efficiently develop fluency in English for all boys and girls. We recognize the child's primary language and culture and would promote cross-cultural understanding. This would be accomplished with an immersion program in English which would include intensive ESL (English as a Second Language). Bilingual aides would offer native language assistance. This would create an orderly transition to English language fluency. A second language could be offered for enrichment for all students in Chinese, Farsi, German, Korean, Spanish, etc., if the local site had the resources. Teacher waivers would be eliminated.

YES☒ **NO☐**

REFERENDUM II

I am in favor of bilingual education as it is outlined in California Education Code 52100, the present policy of ULTA on bilingual education and the most recent legislation (AB 37) to extend bilingual education in its present pedagogical form in California.

This would allow the use of non-English speaking students' native language until they become literate enough in their primary language to transition both learning and language skills into the English language.

This student would receive oral English language development (ESL), as well as all other subjects, from a credentialed classroom teacher with assistance from a bilingual paraprofessional (aide).

Those teachers who would continue their professional development in language minority education (bilingual education) would be given a cash stipend/bonus for each area successfully completed for the California Bilingual Certificate of Competency. The primary goal would be English literacy for every child.

YES☐ **NO☒**

Illustration 5

Your Child Has a Right to Learn English

Many Glenwood teachers and parents believe that the restrictions of the Los Angeles Unified School District's Master Plan for Bilingual Education prevents them from doing their best to help your child learn.

If your goal for your child is for him to become proficient in English so that he may take his place in the mainstream of this country, you will probably agree with us. How can a program which limits instruction in English to 40 minutes or less per day be best for your child?

Why do so many Glenwood children remain in the bilingual program throughout their elementary school years? Some are unable to pass the requirements to be allowed to transition to English language instruction. Why does the school district allow this to happen? Because for every child who remains in the bilingual program the school district receives $350.

We believe that children do need *assistance* in their native language. We believe that when instruction is only in the native language a child has less reason to learn English.

If you agree with us, you *do* have a choice. The law clearly states that you can demand an English Language Development Program for your child. The school officials will say their program is best. You will have to insist on a program change for your child or your wishes will not be honored. Do not let anyone intimidate you.

If you agree with us and want your child to be taught in English, sign both tear-offs. Send one to the office and one to Room #___.

Thank you.

/s/ Parent's Name
/s/ Sally Peterson

I want my child _____ enrolled in an English Language Development Program as allowed by Federal Law.

Parent's signature: _____ Date _____

Return to the Office.

I want my child _____ enrolled in an English Language Development Program as allowed by Federal Law.

Parent's signature: _____ Date _____

Return to Room #___

(Spring 1990 Version)

Endnotes

(1) Procedures for Implementing Requirements of the District Lau Plan and AB 507 in Elementary Schools. Los Angeles: Los Angeles Unified School District, Office of the Associate Superintendent, Instruction Bulletin Number 41, 1982, p.8.

(2) Crossing the Schoolhouse Border: Immigrant Students and the California Public Schools -- A California Tomorrow Policy Research Report. Laurie Olsen, Project Director. Los Angeles: California Tomorrow, 1988, p. 90.

(3) Dr. Robert Rossier, Analysis of Opinions of Legal Counsels on the Sunsetting of AB 507. California, 1987, p. 8.

(4) 70th Convention of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO Committee Reports. Human Rights and Community Relations, 1988, p. 7.

(5) Rick Holland, Education and Public Welfare Division Analyst, Bilingual Education: Recent Evaluations of Local School District Programs and Related Research on Second-Language Learning. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1986, p. 38.

(6) Keith Baker and Adriana de Kanter, An Answer from Research on Bilingual Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1983, pp. 45-46.

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(8) In Re: Teresa P. v. Berkeley Unified School District, February 1989, p. 21.

Additional References

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